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# **COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT LETTER OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SECRETARIES OF NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, AND EDUCATION AND THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**INITIATIVE #14**

**NOVEMBER 2021**

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Division of Soil and Water Conservation

600 East Main Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor

Richmond, VA 23219



Virginia's final Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on August 23, 2019 includes the following commitment number 14:

Enhance Coordination among State Agencies assisting farmers:

Multiple state and local agencies provide technical assistance to farmers employing management practices to improve farm operations and reduce runoff of excess nutrients and sediment. These state agencies include the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Forestry (VDOT), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Farmers also receive assistance from their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). These agencies work collaboratively, but also recognize the opportunity to enhance that collaboration. Through a joint letter of agreement signed November 2020 between the Secretaries of Natural and Historic Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, and Education and the Virginia Association of SWCDs (VASWCD), Virginia committed to identify and implement avenues for cross-collaboration that address technical assistance, education and training, research needs, and agriculture incentives.

Each of the actions described in the joint letter of agreement and detailed with timelines, deadlines and benchmarks below will advance the goals of the Chesapeake Bay WIP and the ability of agricultural producers to achieve production needs with assistance through better coordination and delivery of agricultural programs. In addition, a steering committee of agency and partner (DCR, VDOT, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, and VASWCD) staff will meet no less than two times each calendar year to assess progress and propose modifications to the signatories.

## **Action Item 1- Training and Programs**

Continue and expand cross training of SWCD staff as described below by state environmental agencies through the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum including updates and information on WIP implementation.

### **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD):**

Agency Lead Contact: Dr. Kendall Tyree, VASWCD Executive Director

VASWCD staff and Leadership team members will attend the annual DCR VA Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program training each spring. We will promote this opportunity with our 47 SWCDs as an opportunity for also cross collaboration with key partner agencies, including but not limited to VDOF, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, in attendance.

VASWCD Staff attend regular VACS training. Additional training has been provided to staff and directors. October 2021 another training was hosted ~~in~~ by VASWCD in partnership with DCR in a virtual setting. Details on this training have been advertised to our broadest email list serves.

VASWCD staff and leadership will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program's Technical Advisory Committee (and assigned TAC subcommittees).

VASWCD Leadership serves on the VACS TAC and assigned subcommittees for Programmatic Needs and Cover Crop/Nutrient Management. This responsibility is handled by our VASWCD Past President, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and VASWCD Executive Director. The VASWCD Executive Board meets regularly and receives updates on TAC work.

Invite and encourage collaborative engagement and cross training at VASWCD events including the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

VASWCD has traditionally requested partner involvement at our VASWCD Annual Meeting held in December and other training events throughout the year, recognizing the critical importance of partnerships. During COVID-19 the VASWCD has significantly increased virtual training opportunities focused on cross collaborative partner opportunities. Since September 2020 over 50 virtual trainings have occurred for staff, Directors and partners. Many of these trainings have been joint sessions with partners. Sessions have included Soil Health, DEQ Ag BMP Loan Programming, DCR VACS programming information, Nutrient Management Planning & Cover Crops with DCR and USDA-NRCS, Introduction & Collaboration with the new NRCS State Conservationist, and more.

Build upon virtual trainings and partner opportunities to continue expanding communication, coordination, and collaboration with partner agencies.

Our need to balance in person and virtual trainings so to enhance communication, coordination and collaboration will continue to be a need moving forward. The VASWCD has an Annual Meeting Planning committee that has also evolved into ~~also~~ planning annual training efforts.

This committee meets regularly. Partners have been participating in this conversation and have been critical to helping identify and meet needs.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

Additional information related to the Action Item: VASWCD has traditionally requested partner involvement at our VASWCD Annual Meeting in December, and at other training events throughout the year, recognizing the critical importance of partnerships.

During COVID-19 the VASWCD has significantly increased virtual training opportunities focused on cross collaborative partner opportunities including holding recent joint sessions on DEQ Ag BMP Loan Programming, Legacy Planning for Farm & Forest Owners with VCE and DOF, Nutrient Management Planning and Cover Crops with DCR and NRCS. While the VASWCD has hosted these events for SWCD Staff and Directors, all partners have been invited to these virtual trainings to further build on cross collaboration training needs. This increased virtual need for training and partner engagement will continue.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, Agriculture Stewardship Act (ASA) Program Manager

VDACS ASA Program staff will attend training courses in the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum.

We will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program's Technical Advisory Committee (and assigned subcommittees).

Attend annual VACS trainings and update sessions.

Continue to participate in the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

Provide training and materials on the ASA Program at annual SWCD Employee Trainings and other events

Continue to attend monthly local SWCD meetings as needed.

- VDACS –ASA Program staff have attended all necessary training courses in the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum.
- ASA Program staff actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share VACS Program's Technical Advisory Committee, as well as the animal waste and stream protection subcommittees.
- ASA Program staff have attended all VACS trainings and update sessions
- ASA Program staff continue to participate in meetings held by the VASWCD and plan to participate in the VASWCD Annual Meeting in December 2021
- ASA Program staff participated in the annual SWCD Employee Training at Graves Mountain Lodge and provided a program update.

- ASA Program staff continue to attend monthly SWCD meetings as needed and have a standing offer to provide training to any district upon request.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

Necessary additional information related to the Action Item: ASA Program staff has traditionally provided training on the ASA Program at Annual SWCD Employees Association Training at Graves Mountain Lodge and to new District Directors at DCR sponsored trainings.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

The DCR Conservation Planning Certification Training program will continue to invite and include agency partners to provide informational programs about their purpose and efforts and how they contribute to work in the agricultural community and support SWCDs. Current platforms for agency cross training include in-person events, webinars, and recorded program highlights on the COVLC. DCR has partnered with DEQ, DWR, DHR, and VDACS to provide opportunities for the sharing of agency responsibilities and ways to collaborate. DCR will expand invitations to include the other signatories.

Trainings for Soil and Water Conservation Staff and other partners have been conducted with DEQ, DWR, DHR, and VDACS through webinars and on-line courses over the last couple of months. Planning is underway on expansion of opportunities in 2022.

These trainings are annual events in support of planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and others.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

VDOF staff will continue to assist in this effort as requested.

VDOF staff will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program's Technical Advisory Committee and appropriate subcommittees.

The VDOF Forest Management Division is active with the DCR Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Stream Protection and Forestry subcommittee. The DCR TAC meeting is to be held on October 21 in Buckingham County.

Potential opportunities to participate with SWCD:

**October 7, 2021 – Annual Meeting/Training Committee** – The VASWCD Annual Meeting and training committee convened to discuss training topics and prepare for the December virtual Annual Meeting.

**December 6, 2021 – December 7, 2021 – VASWCD Virtual Annual Meeting**

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing.

VDOF Forest Management staff will conduct a riparian buffer establishment training session for newer employees in the fall/winter of 2021. Invitations will be sent to local partnering agencies for their inclusion.

A riparian buffer training session for new employees will be planned for fall 2021.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agent Appointed Directors to local SWCD boards.

Specific examples of partnerships and actions taken are included in the appropriate sections labeled 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c) below.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

### **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

DEQ Water Programs and regional staff will continue to attend training courses in the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum and update online training sessions as appropriate.

DEQ Water Programs and regional staff will continue to participate in the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

Provide training and materials on the DEQ water programs at annual SWCD Employee Trainings and other events.

Continue to attend monthly local SWCD meetings as needed and provide status updates as appropriate.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing and cover items 1 (a), (b) and (c)

DEQ staff continue to engage with SWCDs including meeting attendance and information sharing.

## **Action Item 1(a)**

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: David Bryan, Agriculture Incentives Manager; Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Ensure invitations are sent to partner agency contacts for the Annual DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program training and update events. In addition to invitations, partners will be provided time on the agenda for any updates or information sharing. This will also include the annual VASWCD meeting through its planning committee to ensure space on the agenda for partner sharing and interaction with meeting attendees.

These trainings are annual events in support of the VACS program and planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and other staff from federal and state partners.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

All partner agencies were invited to the series of VACS update webinars held summer 2021. In addition DEQ staff presented on Agricultural Loan Program and 319 Grant program and DCR staff presented updates to the Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS) program.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Regional Foresters, Bryant Bays – Eastern Region, Robbie Talbert – Central Region, Chris Thomsen – Western Region

VDOF staff will continue to attend these annual meetings as available.

Attendance at the VASWCD Annual meeting in December is planned

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing

Efforts will be made to have at least one Regional leadership staff member attend the 2021 meeting to provide VDOF agency and program updates, as requested.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agent Appointed Directors to local SWCD boards.

VCE is a historical sponsor of the VASWCD annual meeting and the VCE Associate Director and multiple Extension agents attend this meeting on an annual basis. VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting as requested by VASWCD. Two VCE Extension agents participate in the DCR Ag BMP Technical Advisory Committee (and subcommittees) as voting members, and the Associate Director attends as a non-voting member as scheduling allows. DCR invited VCE and other partners to the June 2021 VACS update.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

## **Action 1(b)**

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Coordinate with agency contacts to share invitations to water quality programs offered by DCR that will include SWCD staff. In addition, DCR will share partner agencies programs with SWCD staff to encourage attendance. Where available contact hours for DCR Certified Conservation Planners will be offered to also encourage participation. DCR will use existing training efforts with partners and add other partner agencies to existing trainings online or in person as well as add additional cross training events as needed to provide sufficient time for learning. DCR staff will also participate and provide training for partner agencies cross training efforts with their staff.

Many trainings are annual events in support of the VACS program work and planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and other staff from federal and state partners. Additional training that DCR staff will be invited to present at will be at the discretion of partners.

DCR – Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) Staff have assisted in the planning and presentations at annual training events by the Virginia Conservation District Employees Association and the VASWCD. The training events also provided contact hours to DCR Certified Conservation Planners.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

VDOF staff will continue to partner and attend these meetings as available. Currently, many staff attend local SWCD monthly meetings to ensure technology transfer, landowner needs are met and practices are implemented.

VDOF staff reported participating in 32 local SWCD meetings across the state.

VDOF will continue to provide training in areas of deficiency and in new sciences and techniques as they are developed.

The VDOF Four presentations/trainings were conducted across the state.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food.

VCE currently engages in collaborations and cross training with SWCD and other partner agency staff in multiple ways. For example, VCE is a sponsor of the VASWCD annual meeting and the VCE Associate Director and multiple Extension agents attend this meeting on an annual basis. VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting as requested by VASWCD.



In the past year VCE has also shared internal procedural documents such as the Emergency Action Plan and COVID organizational procedures with the VASWCD Executive Director, demonstrating that this partnership extends beyond conservation programming. VCE, in concert with the Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and partner agencies, organized and delivered a joint training in January 2021 on the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory Project for VCE and VASWCD employees. The training was also attended by numerous Task Force partners and personnel, to include representatives from DCR, NRCS, and DEQ, among others. VCE Extension foresters delivered a forestland transition educational program to VASWCD staff on October 20, 2020. VCE agents and administrators attend and deliver updates at annual area VASWCD meetings, and deliver an Introduction to VCE presentation at the VASWCD new director and board member orientation, among many other collaborations. Extension agents and VASWCD typically work closely together on numerous projects at the local level. VCE public-facing programs are open to all, and are frequently attended by VASWCD and other partner agency employees. In addition, in November 2020 VCE hosted an agency update session for agricultural producers through the VCE Ag Today program with NRCS, DCR, SWCD, and FSA personnel delivering agency updates. This session was recorded and is posted here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77XNmezha18&list=PL7\\_2QUVzrPXDpYsV2HY11CH8KBrluifyO&index=33](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77XNmezha18&list=PL7_2QUVzrPXDpYsV2HY11CH8KBrluifyO&index=33) for further viewing. Note that agency updates of this nature are typically offered in person at various VCE conferences and in person meetings throughout the year. The update session took place virtually this year due to the pandemic. VCE extension specialists deliver research-based information in nutrient management, integrated pest management, crop management, and soil health at events throughout the year that are attended by personnel from multiple state and federal conservation agencies as well as private companies and citizens.

VCE Associate Director and at least six Extension agents plan to attend the VASWCD Annual Meeting.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These engagement efforts have been—and continue to be—ongoing.

### **Action 1(c)**

#### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: Blair Gordon, Soil and Water Conservation District Liaison

Coordinate with agency contacts to identify representatives for appointment to each district that should be contacted and invited to local district meetings. Use established procedures to insure membership and attendance to meetings is consistent with requirements and agreements.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

These commitments will follow the established multi-year appointment system already in place.

Coordination between agencies and DCR have continued to ensure partners are represented on each district board as needed based on staffing or other changes.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Senior Area Foresters (SAF).

VDOF staff will continue to partner and attend these meetings as available. Currently, many VDOF staff attend local SWCD monthly meetings to ensure technology transfer, landowner needs are met and practices are implemented.

Requirements to ensure VDOF representation at the SWCD meetings exist within SAF Employee Work Profiles.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director of Economy, Community, and Food; District Directors, and; Extension agents serving as Appointed Directors on local SWCD boards.

Virginia Cooperative Extension agents serve as Appointed Directors on local SWCD boards. VCE and VASWCD completed the Extension Appointed Directors appointment/reappointment process in fall of 2020 via an established multi-year appointment procedure already in place. The appointments were approved at the December 16, 2020 Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board Meeting. Currently all local SWCD boards have Extension agent Appointed Directors.

VCE worked with Tri-County/City SWCD to appoint an Extension agent, in a timely manner, to fill a Board opening created by the resignation of the previous agent.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Extension Appointed Director terms expire on January 1, 2025. Vacancies that arise in the interim will be addressed as they occur.

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## **Action Item 2 – Employee Responsibilities**

Adjust relevant agency staff Employee Work Profiles (EWP) and position descriptions to include responsibilities related to cross-agency training, coordination, and farmer and landowner outreach.

### **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

The Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) of the three existing ASA Program staff will be amended to include cross-agency trainings, coordination, and farmer and landowner outreach

responsibilities. The EWP for a new ASA Coordinator position filled in July 2021 has been written to include these responsibilities.

These actions are currently underway.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Changes to the EWPs established in October 2021.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contact: Darryl M. Glover, DCR Deputy Director.

Relevant DCR-DSWC employees will have their Employee Work Profiles and positions descriptions updated to reflect new responsibilities related to accomplishing WIP goals. This will include working with Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program (VSU-SFOP) and other outreach efforts to enhance awareness of DCR managed programs to underserved landowners and operators.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These updates occurred in fall 2020 and further updates will take place every year and be reflected in the new EWPs annually.

Edits to current EWPs will be in place by January 2022.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Regional Foresters, Bryant Bays – Eastern Region, Robbie Talbert – Central Region, Chris Thomsen – Western Region

Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) will be adjusted to place emphasis on cross-agency training and capitalize on outreach opportunities within VDOF Work Areas.

#### **Central Region:**

Below is in most field employees EWP's:

- Ensure VDOF attends at least 1 meeting per quarter in both the Shenandoah and Lord Fairfax SWCD's
- Assist localities with implementation of the Chesapeake Bay WIP Phase III requirements by completing the following aimed at protecting watersheds.

#### **Western Region:**

Our work area staff and occasionally regional staff attends SWCD meetings pretty much whenever they have a meeting. These meetings have been less frequent during the pandemic.

The EWP language below provides guidance to the SAF's who then assign responsibility to work area staff to attend meetings work with cost share etc.

- Working with private landowners and partner agencies, strive to increase riparian buffer establishment in the work area with a goal of (goal varies by work area)

- Working with private landowners and partner agencies, strive to increase prescribed burning in the work area; focusing on wildlife habitat improvement, desirable regeneration, site preparation or invasive species control.
- Ensure work area staff actively promotes agency mission and programs to community leaders by engaging Planning Commissions, Boards of Supervisors, SWCDs and other appropriate entities.

### **Eastern Region:**

SAFs and foresters have requirements to attend SWCD meetings and interact with their staff. This year the SAF EWP reads:

- Build/maintain relationships with county Planning Commissions, Board of Supervisors, SWCDs, etc. within the work area.

Local staff frequently engage SWCD staff, attend monthly meetings, assist with projects like Meaningful Watershed Experience education, work together on riparian buffer plantings, and help with outreach and tree programs.

A few specific examples: joint outreach with Henricopolis SWCD at Richmond area farmers markets and cooperated with Northern Neck SWCD on RAFT project. Here's another example from the Hanover-Caroline SWCD newsletter:

*“The Virginia Department of Forestry's mission is to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. To achieve this, most of Jesse's work centers on helping landowners with forest management planning and practice implementation, education and outreach and wildland firefighting. He is a resource for anyone in the county with questions about the health of their forest, or even a tree in their front yard! Virginia DOF works closely with Hanover-Caroline SWCD to expand outreach and provide more holistic management recommendations to private landowners. Jesse's work as a forester also includes supporting the District with education programs like Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience field days and Envirothon.”*

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These updates will occur in the fall 2021 EWP cycle.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Lonnie Johnson, Associate Director for Field Operations and Administration; District Directors, and; VT CALS Human Resources.

Actions Taken: Virginia Cooperative Extension agent position descriptions currently include language and expectations regarding collaborations with partner organizations and educational outreach. No further action needed.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This is an ongoing effort.

### **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

The Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) of the relevant water program staff will be amended to include participation in DCR's conservation planning certification curriculum and other stakeholder activities. Other DEQ staff will be engaged as necessary.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Changes to the EWPs occurred in October 2021.

Action will be taken during the development cycle of Employee Work Profiles. **Action 2(a)**

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contact: James E. Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Future grants and contracts between DCR and SWCDs and VASWCD will contain language to enhance cross-training responsibilities to reflect a greater partnership between partners on an annual basis. Language will include expected outcomes from the grants and contracts.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Updates to annual grants and contracts will take place beginning FY2022 and be reflected in the new grant awards and contracts going forward.

The FY2022 grants were updated to provide more emphasis on training and partnership. Efforts to refine and enhance those documents will continue.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

Inclusion of language within the VDOF Policy and Procedures 7-2 "Rural Financial Assistance Programs" that emphasizes the importance and benefits of cross training and identify opportunities to share implementation goals.

In progress, not completed. Target date end of 2021.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This language inclusion effort will be completed in 2021.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Extension specialists and Extension agents.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership organization. It is common practice to include agency partners on grant applications as co-Principal Investigators, manage grants together, hire jointly funded positions, and so forth. For example, DCR and VCE currently enjoy one such significant partnership in nutrient management subject matter, and the VCE-Buckingham County Office and Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District share a jointly funded program assistant. On multiple occasions grants obtained by Extension agents have been routed through the local SWCD office as fiscal agent.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This is an ongoing effort.

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### **Action Item 3 – Agency Training and Workshop**

Establish cross training among state agencies who interact directly with farmers and landowners to better prepare all staff, regardless of agency, to make referrals in the field to programs housed within another agency. Hold an inter-agency workshop for each agency to present on their agricultural related programs, which may occur through an existing event. Ensure state agencies are well versed in programs offered by local SWCDs.

#### **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

ASA Program staff will participate in an annual inter-agency workshop to present information to educate partner agencies on the roles of the ASA Program and its partnership with local SWCDs in addressing complaints of water pollution from agricultural activities.

ASA Program Manager presented information on the ASA Program at the WIP 14 Interagency Training on September 14, 2021.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Annually

#### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR will work with partner agencies to schedule an annual inter-agency staff training. These interagency trainings will be conducted through a series of webinars, in person meetings, or recorded training residing in COVLC. Each DCR program that works with agricultural clients will provide an introductory presentation to enable partner staff to understand the basics of each program and be able to identify contacts to their clients for additional support through DCR and SWCDs.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Inter-agency training will be enhanced in 2021 with additional opportunities. DCR will work with partners to establish annual timelines for training.

The initial Inter-agency training was held September 14, with presentations from each of the partners.

#### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

Create a yearly task/item that will be reflected on annual VASWCD meeting agenda that focuses specifically on forestry practices.

Engage local Extension agents and SWCD staff to ensure a comprehensive approach to training occurs annually on a local work area approach.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

## **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension specialists, and; Extension agents.

VCE currently engages in collaborations and cross training with SWCD and other partner agency staff in multiple ways. For example, VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting, annual area meetings, and new director and board member orientation. In the past year VCE has also shared internal procedural documents such as the Emergency Action Plan and COVID organizational procedures with the VASWCD Executive Director, demonstrating that this partnership extends beyond conservation programming. VCE, in concert with the Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and partner agencies, organized and delivered a joint training in March 2021 on the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory Project for VCE and VASWCD employees. The training was also attended by numerous Task Force partners and personnel, to include representatives from DCR, NRCS, and DEQ, among others. VCE Extension foresters delivered a forestland transition educational program to VASWCD staff on October 20, 2020. In addition, in November 2020 VCE hosted an agency update session for agricultural producers through the VCE Ag Today program with NRCS, DCR, SWCD, and FSA personnel delivering agency updates. VCE and DEQ developed a new partnership related to the DEQ Ag BMP Loan program whereby effective April 1 DEQ is referring producers to Extension agents if they need help with completing paperwork and submitting it in the system. DEQ offered training to Extension agents in March 2021 as part of this process. DCR trained Extension agents in summer 2021 to equip them for follow-up site visits for the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory project. VCE extension specialists deliver research-based information in nutrient management, integrated pest management, crop management, and soil health at events throughout the year that are attended by personnel from multiple state and federal conservation agencies as well as private companies and citizens.

Extension Associate Erin Ling delivered an Introduction to VCE presentation at the DCR led Interagency Training for Agency Staff.

DEQ delivered a presentation on the DEQ Ag BMP Loan program for VCE faculty during our monthly "First Fridays" program.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These partnership efforts are ongoing.

## **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

DEQ will invite partner agencies to present information about their programs during division meetings, as part of periodic DEQ talks or as stand-alone webinars. These events will be conducted through a series of webinars, in person meetings, or recorded training residing in COVLC. Each DEQ program that works with agricultural clients will provide an introductory

presentation upon request to enable partner staff to understand the basics of each program and be able to identify contacts to their clients for additional support.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Inter-agency activities will be enhanced in 2021 with additional opportunities. DEQ will work with partner agencies to establish annual timelines for informational events.

VDOF and DCR presented information at DEQ Water Planning Division Staff Meeting. DEQ participated in inter-agency staff training. Additional training and engagement opportunities will be identified.

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#### **Action Item 4 – Conservation Cabinet**

The Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources should continue to host meetings with the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Secretary of Education, DCR, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, VDOF through the Conservation Cabinet, or if the Conservation Cabinet ceases to exist, then shall host meetings as often as deemed necessary with relevant agency heads to ensure senior management awareness and involvement in assisting farmers and achieving our WIP goals.

##### **Office of the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources**

Agency Lead Contact: Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources for the Chesapeake Bay

The Office will schedule an annual meeting of the three Cabinet Secretaries, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and state agencies engaged in this initiative to discuss progress and review challenges to enhanced collaboration. This meeting may coincide with a meeting of the Conservation Cabinet.

Timeline, deadline, or benchmark: Annually.

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#### **Action Item 5 – VCE Programs**

Virginia Cooperative Extension will incorporate information regarding state and federal agency agriculture and forestry conservation programs and training opportunities, including new employee training programs with a focus on equipping VCE agents to be able to inform farmers of where they can get help for specific environmental or other challenges they observe on farms they visit.

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## **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agents, and; new agent mentors.

VCE utilizes a multi-faceted employee onboarding process that includes introducing new Extension agents to agency partners in the localities. Through this process new agents are able to make connections and become conversant in partner agency programmatic offerings that facilitates client referrals. Extension agents are encouraged by administrators and agent mentors to collaborate with partner agencies on the development and delivery of educational programs.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These engagement efforts have been—and continue to be—ongoing.

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## **Action Item 6 – Cost-Share Program Feedback**

Continue to utilize work groups already in place to facilitate appropriate conversations regarding increased collaboration, cost-share and program delivery including the Chesapeake Bay WIP Interagency Team. Based on this ongoing discussion, solicit views of the members of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group to bring together a feedback loop about successes, failures and adaptations needed. Add Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) to the Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team.

## **Office of the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources**

Agency Lead Contact: Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources for the Chesapeake Bay

The Office has added VCE to the Chesapeake Bay WIP Interagency team that continues to meet monthly. The team will at least annually include an update on this WIP #14 initiative as well as the VACS and ASA programs. This WIP #14 initiative will be included on the agenda for a meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) to solicit additional recommendations for enhanced collaboration from the SAG members.

Timeline, deadline, or benchmark: Annually.

DCR – DSWC conducted the annual Stakeholder TAC process for input and edits to the VACS program of which final edits will be taken to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board in 2022

## **Virginia Department of Forestry**

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The VDOP has participate in monthly Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team meetings.

The VDOP has provided updates to the Chesapeake Bay Clean Up Plan, the Numeric Milestones update, and the Programmatic Updates to the WIP. These updates provide relevant information to progress, shortfalls and anticipated needs going forward to achieve WIPIII goals.

The VDOF has representation to the Chesapeake Bay Program Forestry Work Group. 1 meeting upcoming prior to end of 2021.

The VDOF has representation to the Chesapeake Bay Commission Stakeholder Advisory Group. Upcoming meeting on November 3, 2021.

The VDOF has representation to the Upper Potomac Forest Buffer Strategy Meetings, September 15, 2021 and one meeting in November 2021.

The VDOF is represented in the James River Buffer Consortium and is presenting at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual James River Summit on October 27

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### **Action Item 7 – Enhanced Outreach**

Conduct an interagency review of outreach materials to ensure consistency between agencies and creation of new materials to help landowners compare and contract various programs. Ensure materials highlight the benefits to farmers implementing VACS program best management practices. Build a “one stop shop” on the web that links to all relevant state and federal programs and is connected to training opportunities.

### **Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts**

Agency Lead Contact: Dr. Kendall Tyree, VASWCD Executive Director

VASWCD will review Association materials previously developed to assist SWCDs. Updates will be made where necessary to focus on enhanced outreach and partnership opportunities as well as reference to a “one stop shop” on the web.

Progress Report: Ongoing Efforts

- i. The VASWCD Marketing Committee now is comprised of not only staff and directors but partners, specifically active is a representative from the DCR Public Communications and Marketing Office.
- ii. The VASWCD Marketing Committee has reviewed materials developed by the VASWCD and Districts and created a Marketing Toolkit as a resource to help SWCDs enhance marketing efforts. This toolkit is available at <https://vaswcd.org/marketing-toolkit>.
- iii. The Marketing Committee identified an additional need for SWCD training on outreach and “one stop shop” website efforts and therefore has engaged in an aggressive training effort.
- iv. Trainings:
  - ✓ The VASWCD offered a three-part training series on video making to help further local SWCD outreach efforts. Districts

compiled videos highlighting practices that help market the VACS program among other SWCD and partner programs. Other videos on education were developed. Videos developed were also highlighted by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

- ✓ A three-part training called “Water Words that Work” was offered to SWCDs, Directors and Partners in July 2021 to help further enhance marketing and outreach efforts. The training focused on how to communicate with public audiences about water resources, watershed management, and land conservation. The series focused on messaging to turn passive environmental awareness into pro-environmental behavior. A total of 113 district staff, directors and partners participated in this specific training series. Additional training targeted further to Agricultural Producers is under development based on survey feedback.
- ✓ The VASWCD is offering a three-part training series October 2021 focused on enhancing websites. This training will also discuss the value of utilizing websites for enhanced outreach and creating a more tailored “one stop shop” on the local level website.

Coordinate with other implementing agencies to review outreach materials, create new outreach opportunities and materials for landowners to help them compare and contrast various programs. Provide the space for this material to be shared with SWCDs thru the newly established marketing committee toolkit and other training opportunities.

#### Progress Report:

- i. Provided varied online trainings to SWCD staff to better understand the programs provided. Most recently, training on the Small Farm Outreach Program was provided to attendees of the Annual Employees Training at Graves Mountain in August 2021. Many local SWCDs have now connected with their SFOP specialist to coordinate materials and increase outreach efforts.
- ii. New materials are also now available for staff thru partner efforts and have been articulated thru trainings. For example, staff were made aware of the new division website and updated webpage for Farmer of Color on the DCR website.

Provide input to developing the web-based “one stop shop” for state and federal conservation programs and training opportunities.

Progress Report: Ongoing effort. VASWCD will continue to offer input and insights into a “one stop shop” sharing experiences from SWCDs and VASWCD training efforts, material review, etc.

Provide a web presence on [www.vaswcd.org](http://www.vaswcd.org) that shares and where appropriate links to the agreed upon one stop shop or other enhanced outreach materials.

Progress Report: Ongoing effort.

- i. The VASWCD is in discussion with a contractor on revamping our website to be mobile friendly and provide a more user-friendly experience. The VASWCD will continue to offer input
- ii. A section on partners has been added to our leadership course so that new directors and new employees taking this training have a better understanding of partner efforts. This portion of our online training can be found at <https://vaswcd.org/roles-and-responsibilities1>.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VASWCD Marketing Committee will provide input and discussion by fall 2021 regarding any outreach material needs at the SWCD level. Ongoing conversation and input will be provided to implementing agencies regarding web presence needs.

Necessary additional information related to Action Item: The VASWCD has created a marketing toolkit for SWCDs that remains an evolving document and updates will be addressed as part of the annual plan of work. WIP-14 goals will dovetail with continued ongoing marketing committee outreach efforts underway.

### **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

ASA Program staff will coordinate with other implementing agencies to review outreach materials, create new outreach opportunities and materials for landowners to help them compare and contrast various programs, and provide input to developing the web-based “one stop shop” for state and federal conservation programs and training opportunities.

Internal discussions with ASA Program and Communications staff are underway.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: ASA Program outreach materials will be reviewed and updated by January 1, 2022.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contacts: Darryl Glover, DCR Deputy Director and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator (DCR-DSWC)

DCR has begun the process of updating the division website, including a new webpage in FY21 for Farmers of Color. Updated media materials, including some in Spanish, will allow DCR to

better work with partners to provide information to landowners and farmers that highlight each of DCR's and partners' programs as well as training opportunities. Discussions with partners will include determining the best way to provide and share information in a clear and assessable manner for the benefit of all potential clients.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: The outreach project began in summer of 2021.

DCR has made several updates to the division website and will be making more updates in 2022. The new Farmers of Color page was created and is available for use. DCR and Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program has worked on translations to Spanish of several promotional documents and final review of the documents are under way for accuracy.

### **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Public Information Program Manager in conjunction with Forest Management Program Manager.

Conduct an internal audit regarding outreach materials that focus on various programs to include the DCR VACS program and VDOF cost share programs as well as grant programs annually.

Coordinate with responsible agency partners the results of findings of internal audit and make edits as necessary.

Create link to the "one stop shop" on the VDOF website.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These audits and revisions will be conducted annually.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Natural Resources Program Team co-chairs Adam Downing and Scott Barrett.

VCE will complete a review of current educational outreach materials, identify gaps, and seek opportunities to partner with collaborating agencies to address identified gaps. VCE will assist with the "one stop shop" concept by providing links to applicable publications currently available through the VCE public website.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VCE publications in this discipline will be reviewed and summarized by January 1, 2022.

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## **Action Item 8 – Update DEQ Information**

Update the information included on the "Our Rivers, Our Bay: Virginia's Path to Clean Water" webpage housed currently on DEQ's website and notify relevant agencies and SWCDs. Currently, DCR, VDOF and VDACS have a link to the DEQ page. Offer links and associated logos and artwork to VCE and the VASWCD for inclusion on their websites.

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## **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

Agency Lead Contacts: DEQ Chesapeake Bay Coordinator and Megan Sommers Bascone, Chesapeake Bay Planning Coordinator

DEQ completed a website revision in FY 2021. Information related to the Chesapeake Bay Phase III WIP is now located at the following link: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/chesapeake-bay/phase-iii-wip>.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DEQ Chesapeake Bay TMDL web pages will be updated when relevant new information is available.

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### **Action Item 9 – VCE Capacity**

Work to increase the capacity of VCE. Currently, VCE has numerous Extension agent vacancies. Identify the regions that VCE is unable to reach, and work to ensure VCE has the capacity to fill these vacancies and others that might occur, thus providing support in those regions.

#### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: VCE Administration; VT CALS HR.

Virginia Cooperative Extension received consideration in the 2020/21 Virginia General Assembly budget that will enable the agency to fill approximately eight agent positions identified through an internal prioritization process, as well as several Extension specialist positions. Support for technology improvements and equipment at Agricultural Research and Extension Centers was also included. Several of these agent positions will likely be in the Chesapeake Bay watershed region, enhancing Extension's capacity to carry out educational programming in concert with partner agencies that positively impacts water quality. In addition, several Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent positions within Bay watershed localities have been filled through a voluntary internal transfer process. Sustained support will enable Extension to continue to address core capacity needs and in turn impact Virginia citizen's environmental, economic, and social well-being.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension agent positions filled include the following counties and cities: Amherst, Danville, Page, Fluvanna, and James City/New Kent. To be determined in FY 22 include Prince Edward, Amelia, Nelson, Roanoke, and Montgomery.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: On-going.

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## **Action Item 10 – Underserved Farming and Forestry Communities**

Evaluate the reach of the (DCR Agricultural BMP) Cost Share Program and other support for farmers and forest landowners to determine underserved farming communities. Develop methods to reach underserved communities that may benefit from the information and assistance agencies provide.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

#### **Action 10: Underserved Farming and Forestry Communities**

Agency Lead Contacts: Darryl M. Glover, DCR Deputy Director, and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

DCR has begun the process of seeking underserved farmers. In FY21 DCR identified agricultural, engineering, and community organizations with connections to underserved communities. The FY22 state budget includes \$250,000 for DCR to partner with Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program and VASWCD on a two-year outreach project intended to provide direct outreach to farmers of color and small farm operations in order to better inform them of the availability of state and federal financial and technical assistance. DCR will also introduce a new option in FY22, the Small Herd Initiative, in selected areas of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, as part of the state agricultural BMP cost share program to incentivize small animal operations to implement livestock stream exclusion.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: The outreach project began in summer 2021.

DCR has entered into an agreement with Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program and has partnered on several program presentations and has a couple more scheduled this fall. The VACS program also launched the Small Herd Initiative in parts of the Chesapeake Bay watershed and is beginning initial review of that initiative and ways to improve it moving forward.

### **Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Virginia State University Extension specialists and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program.

A critical partner in the Virginia Cooperative Extension system, Virginia State University has strong relationships with—and significant experience reaching—limited resource, small, and minority farmers. Through their existing relationships and collaborative partnerships, VSU Extension specialists and Small Farm Outreach Program administrators and technicians are well-positioned to assist DCR with growing connections among these important and underserved audiences. VCE will also support DCR in this initiative through our extensive network of unit offices.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VCE efforts to reach limited resource, small, and minority farmers are ongoing. Support to enhance DCR capacity in this area will follow the timeline established by DCR.

## **Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Dean Cumbia, Forest Management Director, and Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator, Bryant Bays – Eastern Regional Forester and Robbie Talbert – Central Regional Forester

The VDOF is currently working closely with the Black Family Land Trust and the Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Agents to provide outreach and assistance to underserved forestry communities with planning and implementation of forest management practices. The VDOF will use these existing efforts to promote other agency's programs and services.

DOF utilized a USFS Coastal Heirs grant to assist in bringing on a Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) short-term intern to work with the local DOF forester and the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT) staff. The internship provides the student exposure to VDOF programs and services, as well as a glimpse of the forestry profession and potential career options that may be available to them after graduation. It also provides more opportunities in the natural resources sector for students of historically underserved populations.

During the summer of 2021, VDOF provided direct assistance to several landowners with the development of Forest Stewardship Plans, and encouragement of forest management projects.

The VDOF and BFLT are also working with SVCC to determine the feasibility of starting a 2-year forestry technical program on their campus.

The VDOF is working with the BFLT to develop a podcast to be held in early November over lunch time to make farmers aware of tree activities to consider doing during the winter months.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These outreach efforts are ongoing.

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## **Action Item 11 – Agricultural Assessments**

Explore how agricultural assessments developed under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act can be better incorporated into broader conservation plans developed under the auspices of DCR.

Develop a plan to ensure collaboration and update the plan annually.

## **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watersheds and Local Government Assistance Programs



DEQ will explore how agricultural assessments developed under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act can be better incorporated into broader conservation plans developed under the DCR VACS Program. Develop a plan to ensure collaboration between the agencies.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Interagency Coordination discussion and discussion with stakeholders on implementation and considerations for better incorporation of CPBA assessments by August 15, 2021. Proposal for incorporation drafted and feedback solicited from stakeholders including considerations for annual updates by November 15, 2021.

Internal DEQ discussions on reporting and assessment needs and cross-agency discussion with DCR took place in June. Additional stakeholder discussions and proposal forthcoming.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Lead Agency Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR has been in discussions with DEQ since 2016 on ways to update the Agricultural Assessment process and documents. With the development of the DCR Conservation Planning program and enhancements to the planning module DCR is committed to working with DEQ so that conservation plans created by SWCD staff or others will meet the requirements for assessments and corrective plans. This process will reduce duplicative work and assist clients through a simpler and streamlined process.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR began the process in 2016 as part of the creation of the Conservation Planning program and in working with DEQ for a resolution in 2021.

DCR met with DEQ this June to further discussions about program and systems abilities and ways to move forward.

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### **Action Item 12 – Recognition and Reporting**

#### **Action 12(a)**

Establish a recognition program for agency, VCE, and SWCD staff that show excellence or innovation to promoting the goal contained in commitment 14 of the WIP.

### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

DCR can use its existing agency and division recognition programs to develop a WIP Task #14 award. These include categories for awards, a nomination process, a review process, determination of what awards will be (e.g. certificates, etc.), and the timing and manor of announcing awards. The focus will be to highlight significant efforts to advance WIP 14 action items by employees of the partners to this agreement.

Lead Agency Contacts: James E. Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR will work with partners to this agreement in FY22 to develop a process for annual recognition.

DCR will use its recognition program as a starting point of discussion with the partners during the November meeting of the group. This will include categories of awards, criteria, and award gifts.

#### **Action 12(b)**

Provide annual reports on the implementation of these actions to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, the Secretary of Education, Conservation Cabinet, and other entities.

#### **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Lead Agency Contacts: James E. Martin, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR will work with partners to compile and develop annual reports on all twelve actions related to the WIP 14 initiative. Discussions with partners will focus on needed information, timelines, and report layout to show the efforts and progress towards WIP 14 initiative. The reports will then be presented to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Virginia Association of Conservation Districts, the Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Secretary of Education and provided to the full Conservation Cabinet and others entities identified through the work of meeting the goal.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR will work with partners in 2021 to develop a process and schedule of reporting to meet this annual requirement. Initial presentations to those listed above will occur in the fall of 2021.